The Portfolio Connection

Newsletter

November/December, 1992 Vol 1 Issue No. 5

Also in this issue:

News	- Page 2
Reader Reviews	- Pages 3/4
Beginners Column	- Page 4
Worksheet Review	- Page 5
BSE Review	- Page 6/7
Big Prize Competition	- Page 7
View Point	- Pages 8/9
Games Corner	- Page 9

Season's Greetings to All Our Readers and Customers!

This issue comes to you a little late but is packed with articles, news and reviews for your Christmas reading!

Newsletter to Become Subscription Only

Due to the growing number of Portfolio users on our mailing list, we are no longer able to provide a free newsletter. Therefore, as from this issue, the newsletter will be subscription only. However, we think you'll find it excellent value for money and to soften the blow, we'll be providing special offers for subscribers only on a regular basis. See enclosed Subscription Form for further details.

Big Prize Competition!

On page 7 you'll find a lucky number which could win you a prize in our Big Prize Competition. For details of the exciting prizes on offer, how to enter and how to increase your chances of winning turn to page 7 now!

What - Still No Catalogue?

Re-writing the catalogue has proved to be a bigger job than we had imagined and the new catalogues will not be ready until the New Year at least. For details on how to obtain a copy when they are available, see the enclosed subscription form. If you wish to obtain an update of the existing catalogue then send a C5 or A4 size SAE with 2 18p stamps to The Portfolio Connection at the address on the enclosed subscription form.

Memory Storage

The first shipment of the new BSE interfaces and Flashdrive 25 have now arrived, but production delays on the new Flash Ram Cards mean a long wait for Portfolio users who want cheaper card storage - see page 2 for more details.

Reader Reviews

This issue sees the introduction of reader reviews which are readers' personal opinions of Portfolio products and, whilst they do not necessarily coincide with our own views, will give you an additional perspective on Portfolio products.

Fax problems...

We have been having a few problems with our fax switch so if you have trouble faxing us - please let us know - thanks!

New This Month:

Two new sets this issue:

New Sets

GM3 - Games 3

Another full set of games and novelties to while away an hour or two after the Christmas pud!:

- **12** - the dozen puzzle game
- **Ch** - chess
- **Chch** - Chinese chequers
- **Sol** - peg solitaire
- **Rev** - the game of reversi
- **Sokoban** - this intriguing game was written for the HP95lx but runs on the Port

The following are small text adventures (9k - 37k) which run on the Port:

- **Dragon** - find the dragon, but don't wake it up!
- **Story** - discover the story hidden in the game
- **Wampus** - hunt the Wampus!
- **Dead** - first of three horror text adventures
- **Legacy** - second of three horror text adventures
- **Phantom** - last of the horror text adventures

A couple of novelties for Trekkies:

- **Stardate** - calculate the stardate for a given year
- **Kling** - Klingon language tutorial

And, last but not least:

- **Fancydos** - if you're bored with the same old dos prompt then try these for size! Fifteen batch files which will transform your dos prompt into cakes, planes, trains, Irishmen and even Bart Simpson saying 'Command me, Dude!' These prompts require ansi.sys to be loaded (included in set)

UT3 - Utilities 3

Another batch of useful utilities to get the most from your Port:

- **Alias** - define short aliases for long DOS commands as well as retrieving past commands

/Cont. on Page 5

Top Ten Sets

❶	⇔	**Games 1**
❷	⇔	**Wordprocessing 1**
❸	⇔	**PBasic 1**
❹	⇔	**Utilities 1**
❺	⇔	**PC Accessories 1**
❻	⇧	**Applications 2**
❼	⇩	**Utilities 2**
❽	⇔	**PC Accessories 2**
❾	⇔	**Applications 1**
❿	⇧	**Games 2**
	⇧	**PBasic 2**
	⇧	**Graphics 3**

Bubbling Under:

AP3 - Applications 3

NEWS

First the Good News....

High Capacity Cards Have Arrived

After a wait of more than two months, the first shipment of high-capacity cards finally arrived - and not from Germany as originally expected! The new cards are made by a French company called MicroCard and, a pleasant surprise, do not need batteries. Apart from this they are remarkably similar to conventional cards although they are a fair bit thicker. The first shipment is completely sold out but our suppliers tell us that there is unlikely to be such a delay on future orders (we certainly hope not!). Prices are £169.95 for the 256k card and £225 for the 512k card (inclusive of VAT and P+P). Contact us if you are interested in one of these cards. 1Mb and 2Mb cards should be available soon - phone for details.

BSE Interfaces & Flashdrives Shipping

We have now received the first shipment of these exciting products from BSE. We are extremely impressed and have included a full review on page 6 of the newsletter. We feel that the Universal I/O interface is almost an essential accessory for your Portfolio, offering as it does, a serial port, a parallel port and an EPROM configured as drive B: containing PBasic, File Manager and more, all in a unit the size of the standard parallel interface. Optionally, the unit can be supplied with 512k RAM which will increase your Portfolio's memory to a whopping 640k - sheer luxury! In addition, we have negotiated with BSE to obtain the memory upgrades separately. This means that you can buy the I/O interface without additional RAM now and upgrade to 512k later when you can afford it, by returning the unit to us.

The Flashdrive 25 with 20Mb hard disk gives you all the storage you could need for your Portfolio in a box measuring 5" x 5" x 1". It connects to the parallel interface of your Portfolio and operates from mains or internal rechargeable batteries (supplied). An additional bonus is that it will connect to other desktop PC's, laptops and palmtops in the same way. Prices for the units are as follows:

- Flashdrive 25 with 20Mb disk **£299.95**
- Universal I/O Interface with 512k RAM **£219.95**
- Universal I/O Interface without RAM **£ 89.95**

As usual these prices include VAT & P+P but may be liable to fluctuation due to exchange rates.

And Then The Bad News....

Long Delay For Flash Memory Cards

Hot on the heels of the exciting announcement last issue about the high capacity flash ram memory cards being developed for the Portfolio by the American company Optrol, came the disappointing news that they will be delayed for at least a year. A frustrated spokesman for Optrol told me that their supplier for the special high capacity flash ram chips used in the cards had told them that they will not be able to supply them until late 1993. Optrol are currently looking for another supplier, but for the time being we will all have to wait a bit longer for reasonably storage for our Portfolio's. Here at *The Portfolio Connection*, we are not resting on our laurels and are currently checking out a couple of potential sources for cheaper memory cards. Keep your eye on *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter for details!

Other News....

Hyperlist

Atari have produced an outliner/database for the Portfolio which is similar to the internal address book but has provision for more than one level of indexing. This useful tool has many uses and in addition will run on a conventional PC. The program has been very well received in America but, as far as we know, is not yet available in the UK. Another bonus is that the price does not seem to be too prohibitive. We are currently trying to obtain a copy and will provide more information in a future newsletter when we have more information. In the meantime contact *The Portfolio Connection* if you would like more information on this exciting new package.

Re:Port Newsletter

As mentioned last month, David E Stewart, an American author who has written many of the programs in our library, produces a bi-monthly subscription newsletter called Re:Port. In addition to news, reviews and programming tips, each issue comes with a disk of Portfolio software. Many of the programs are only available to Re:Port subscribers and have included a number of excellent programs such as a spell checker, a charting program, a coms program and a text viewer which gives you a 60x10 screen rather than the usual 40x8 Portfolio screen. You can buy a year's subscription directly from America for $53 but to save the hassle involved, we have arranged with David to distribute Re:Port here in Britain. One year's subscription costs just £35 including P+P - contact *The Portfolio Connection* for details. Please note that prices may be subject to change without notice due to fluctuations in the exchange rate.

Pocket PC Companion at Bargain Price

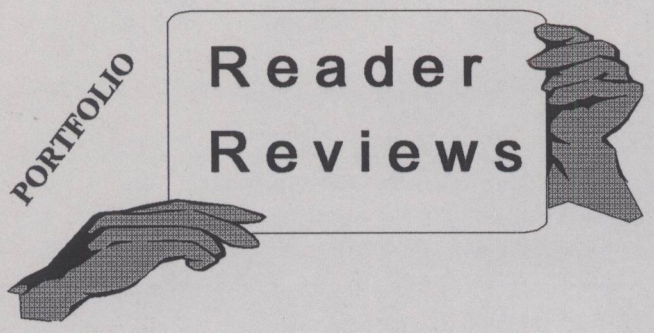
The "Atari Portfolio/DIP Pocket PC Companion" by Peter Baron is a book for those of you wishing to know more about using your Portfolio. Published by Sigma Press and recommended by PC Personal Computing, this book is ideal for those of you starting out with your Portfolio and looking for more instruction than the manual can offer (see the Reader Review on Page 3).

The book usually retails for £12.95 but is now out of print. However, *The Portfolio Connection* is able to obtain a limited number of copies at the bargain price of £6.50 each including P+P.

Let us know as soon as possible whether you would like to take advantage of this almost half-price special offer, so that we can put in a bulk order before they disappear.

Send a cheque/PO to *The Portfolio Connection,* Bucklands Cottage, Wallingford Rd, Cholsey, Oxon, OX10 9HB - estimated delivery time will be about three weeks.

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖



Your chance to have a say

This month sees the introduction of reader reviews. We hope this will become a regular spot in the newsletter and is a chance for you to give your opinions on any piece of software or accessory available for the Portfolio. These opinions will not necessarily concur with our own but will give a personal perspective of the product in question. It is difficult to get a hands-on trial of most Portfolio goods, so we hope this will help readers to make a more informed choice.

This issue sees two reviews, the first on the Autobyte Chequewriter program and the second on two books describing how to get the best from your Portfolio.

Chequewriter by Autobyte

Having used Personal Finance Manager on the ST for some time I was anxious to see whether Chequewriter would give me the same sort of facilities for handling home accounts with the added bonus of not having to trek up to my son's bedroom each time to enter a cash withdrawal.

The ROM card comes bubble packed with a slim handbook. The card itself is equipped with one of those "lumps" which, although easier to grip when loading, makes it harder to store and carry (these somewhat cumbersome 'lumps' seem to be on all ROM cards produced by Autobyte - Ed).

The handbook shows its French-Canadian origins and certain, sometimes important, parts were not that well translated, which made it hard to see how bits of the programme were to be used and set up. It also concentrated heavily on business matters with a distinct bias to Canadian taxes. It offered me little in the way of facilities for managing my domestic finances.

Perhaps the most irksome feature was not entirely the package's fault in that having been written for a Canadian public it required wholesale changes to the Port before use. The CONFIG.SYS file needs editing or replacing each time to show the MM-DD-YYYY format- I found it hard to remember to enter dates like this after 40-odd years of doing the opposite! My own preferences for the size of the c:\ drive needed changing as well.

If you really need this finance package then this may be no inconvenience but I had hoped for a more "plug in and go" system.

I cannot quibble with DIP who sent me a refund without demur or delay. I do note however that the package is still described in the DIP catalogue as being good for home finances. I would have to question that but should you be a Mountie running a company in Quebec you won't go far wrong.

John S. Akers

Port-Hole on Info!

Having purchased my Portfolio second-hand (complete with 64k memory card - all for £90!) and, not having the advantage of the Official User Guide to assist me as it was missing, I was grateful to have a copy of "Atari Portfolio/DIP Pocket PC Companion" by Peter Baron (Sigma Press) included in the package. It was a life-saver!

Whilst being reasonably computer literate in the user sense - I don't program - I didn't know anything about the Port, apart from a 'very large but brief in content' Atari handout from a dealer which was almost useless! It just did not do the product justice! After a period of some five/six weeks, I am firmly convinced that the Port is a superb machine which is the answer to my dream of computing power in my pocket. They can keep their Ps---!

However, enough of preaching to the converted - let's get down to the real purpose of this brief article. Avid for information on the Port of any kind, I came across another book - "The Complete Beginners Guide to the Atari Portfolio" by Barry & Alan Thomas, under their own imprint. In the course of correspondence with Peter Bennett of *The Portfolio Connection*, he invited me to review and compare the two books for the Newsletter, which I am very happy to do.

Obviously, there is a great similarity in content between the two, because they cover the same subject - but the most immediate difference is in the layout and the type of printface used. Although the "Guide" contains 318 pages and the "Companion" only 244. do not let that mislead you - they both probably present the same amount of information! In fact, the latter volume may contain marginally more! The reason for this is due to the approach in layout _ the Thomas book is much clearer in headings, wide margins and spacing and, as such, more user friendly - it is less daunting to the new Port owner. However, in fairness, it took them to page 61 to mention the FDisk command which I think you will agree is vital to the newcomer and Baron in the "Companion" gets to it by page 4.

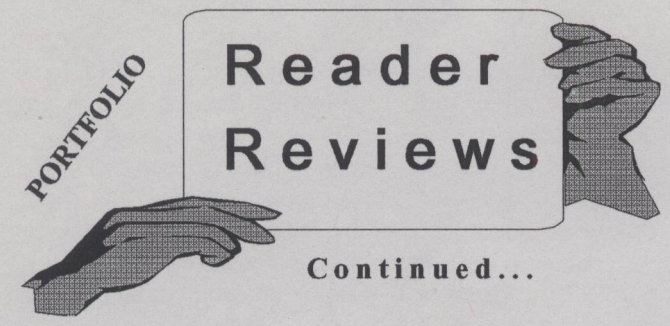
The "Companion" is crammed with information and everything is there. I particularly liked the "screenshot" effect of the various examples of screen layout in the book - the print is very similar to that we are so used to on the Portfolio.

Both books give good coverage to the use of the Worksheet and useful illustrative examples of its practical application. The "Companion" provides not only a list of Lotus 1-2-3 functions recognised by the Port, but also those which are not! This could be very useful to the Lotus 1-2-3 user in determining compatibility.

The Diary, Editor, Address. Calculator and Setup functions are similarly covered in both books, as is printing with the Portfolio. However, in the case of the latter, the approach is decidedly different. The "Guide", I think, gives less information on printing as such, but for those of you with access to a laser printer, there is a complete chapter on the use of the page description language, PostScript, for Port users together with details of a suite of PostScript programs available from TPP Ltd. on 3.5" and 5.25" disks.

Although I have not had the opportunity to sample the programs offered, they do look very interesting.

/Continued on Page 4



They include, and I quote "programs to print bar charts, line graphs and pie charts from Worksheet data; programs to print Diary and Address Book files in Filofax style and programs to print text in a variety of styles - circular, shaded, italic, and so on." My mouth is kind of watering at the thought of those goodies - although Peter will probably tell me that these or at least some of them are available through his PD offerings. (Actually, *The Portfolio Connection* is notably lacking in programs to enable graphics printout from the Port. Budding Portfolio PD & Shareware programmers please note! - Ed)

Incidentally, the cost is £14 for the disk including packing and VAT. Not to be outdone - the Sigma book in co-operation with DIP (Distributive Information Processing Ltd.) offers FREE software to purchasers of the "Companion" who apply before the end of December 1992. The programs include a File Manager as well as a Tutorial and Welcome Pack. If you apply, ask for the latest DIP catalogue and price list which I am certain you will find interesting.

My verdict as to which is the best book, well you pays your money and you take your choice - they both have their good points and I think worth the £15 cost for each and they ARE about our beloved Portfolio.

One thing neither of them tells is how to change a Memory Card battery or the type which would have been useful. Neither do they tell me why I have had two "crashes" in the past week (must be the changeable weather) but they both told me how to RESET. Buy them and enjoy them!

Derek Bell

Note: The Atari Portfolio/Pocket PC Companion is available at the special price of £6.50 (including P+P) for a limited period. See Page 2 for details...

Wanted: Your Opinions

If you have any Portfolio-related products which you really like or dislike, then why not write a short review and send it to us? The review need not be long and you can send it to us preferably as a text file on a 5¼" or 3½" disk or otherwise as a printout. Each review published will receive a £5 voucher towards any goods available from *The Portfolio Connection*. Send your contribution to:

Portfolio Reader Reviews
The Portfolio Connection
Bucklands Cottage
Wallingford Road
Cholsey
Oxon OX10 9HB

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

Beginners Column

Navigating the Keyboard - Part 1

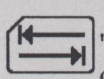
Out of all the palmtop computers, the Portfolio has one of the easiest keyboards to type on - in fact, I'm typing this part of the column on it at the moment! However, the keyboard can seem quite confusing at times, the reason being that the Portfolio tries to cram the usual 102 keys found on a desktop keyboard into a mere 63 keys. As a result, many of the keys double up and have more than one use (up to four uses in fact!)

Let's start by looking at the what the keys do if pressed on their own. Starting in the top left-hand corner we have the Escape key marked 'Esc'. This is a very useful key and is used for backing out of situations. For example, if you are in one of the built-in applications, pressing 'Esc' once or twice will bring up a small exit menu box which says Save? Yes, No. Choosing Yes or No will get you out of the application, saving your work if you chose Yes (you may need to give your work a name) and not saving it if you chose No.

Interestingly, if you press 'Esc' when presented with the Exit menu box, you back out of the Exit menu itself back to your work. This is the case with most, if not all, of the Portfolio menu boxes.

Continuing across the top row we have the number keys 1 to 0, - and =. Pressing each of these keys will produce the characters printed on the lower part of the keys (that is the numbers 1 to 0, - and =). The numbers 7, 8 & 9 are printed in red but don't worry about that at the moment, all will be revealed later!

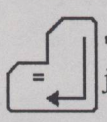
On the far right of the top row we find the backspace key with a large left-pointing arrow on its face. Pressing this key will move the cursor one place to the left, erasing the character immediately to the left.



The first key on the second row down is the 'Tab' key. Pressing this key will cause the cursor on the screen to jump to the right by a set number of spaces. This is most useful in the editor and the number of spaces jumped can be set by the user. In some programs, the tab key will cause the screen cursor to jump from one area of the screen to another. For example in a database program, the tab key might cause the cursor to jump from the 'first name' row to the 'last name' row.

Next on the second row we have ten 'letter' keys, which will normally give lower case letters when pressed, and two symbol keys which give the character printed on the lower part of the key when pressed - namely the square brackets [and].

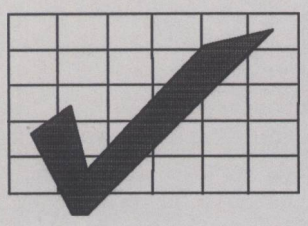
The first key on the third row is the 'Lock' key. At the DOS command line (ie the C> or A> prompt), pressing 'Lock' will bring up the Portfolio status line at the bottom of the screen with the date, time and information about certain keyboard settings. Next we have letter keys and two character keys (; and ') exactly as in the second row.



The last key on the third row is the 'Enter' or 'Return' key. Press this to confirm a command or jump to the next line in editor and address book.

The start of the fourth row is the shift key which is repeated at the opposite end of the row. This has no function when pressed by itself but is used with the other keys to produce special characters. Either shift key can be used.

More next Issue...



Worksheet Review

In the next two issues we take a look at a couple of worksheets to help with balancing your accounts.

The first, BALANCE.WKS, is in Set AP1 and the second, RECACC.WKS is in Set AP3.

BALANCE.WKS

This simple spreadsheet by Bruce Martin is an aid to managing your cheque account on a monthly basis. The sheet itself is a template which should remain unaltered. The idea is that at the beginning of each month you copy the spreadsheet to a new title eg JAN1993.WKS and put all of your January expenditure in this file. At the end of January you would then copy balance.wks to another new file - FEB1993.WKS and so on.

The sheet itself consist of seven columns labelled from left to right:

Date . Description . Debit . Credit . Assumed . Actual . Out

In the first row, the balance brought forward is entered into the first cell under 'credit'. If you are overdrawn (which you may well be after Christmas!), the amount is entered as a negative number and displayed with brackets round it. There are then 24 rows under this to put in credits and debits on a day by day basis. The balance is calculated in the 'assumed' column. Whenever your actual balance is known, this is entered under 'actual'. The 'out' column will show how much your assumed balance is out from your actual balance. At the end of the month, the balance to take forward is shown under the line at the bottom of the spreadsheet.

Remember when entering a date to put an apostrophe in front of the first figure, otherwise the spreadsheet will assume you are entering a calculation. Also bear in mind that the sheet will not correctly show your transactions until you have recalculated the worksheet. You do this by pressing Fn-9 and a small window will appear saying 'Recalculating...'.

So there we have it - hardly a full scale accounting program but definitely a useful tool for balancing your accounts.

Next issue we'll take a look at RECACC.WKS.....

The PBasic Column

Sorry, but due to a lack of space, we are unable to bring you the PBasic Column this month. However, it will be back in the next issue.

New this Issue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

- **History** - retrieve and edit past DOS commands
- **Dosmap** - displays how your Port's memory is being used
- **Drives** - gives the drives connected to your Portfolio
- **Dryprg** - Diary Purge. place past months' diary entries into separate files
- **Hide** - hide and unhide files
- **Move** - move files from one directory to another
- **Lzhe** - extract files compressed with Yoshi's Lharc program
- **Pkunzip** - extract files compressed with Pkzip
- **Plm** - Portfolio line monitor, monitors the serial port
- **Qy** - gives quick time in words
- **PCPass** - password protection program
- **Quick** - loads specific files into Portfolio applications
- **Alarm** - change the sound of your Portfolio's alarm

The set also contains a number of batch files and batch file utilities to make life easier:

- **Autoex** - a sample batch file for recovering after crashes
- **Bat** - a clever series of batch files accessed from a menu to carry out various Portfolio functions
- **Backup** - a series of batch files to automate back-ups
- **PFBack** - another series of batch files to automate back-ups
- **Menu** - a series of professional utilities to create Portfolio-type menus and file selection lists from batch files

The following are a series of small programs to carry out Portfolio functions from batch files:

- **Alarm** - sound alarm
- **Ask** - ask a question
- **Beep** - beep the speaker
- **Both** - set display refresh to both
- **Call** - call another batch file from within a batch file
- **Cdrive** - check if drive connected (useful to see if flashdrive hard disk is connected)
- **Dial** - dial a number
- **Error** - display a message in a box
- **Keyclk** - sound a keyclick from speaker
- **Keyfsh & Keys** - set display refresh to keys
- **Norm** - set display refresh to normal
- **Setlng** - set Portfolio language
- **Slow** - set Port speed to slow
- **Timed** - set display refresh to timed

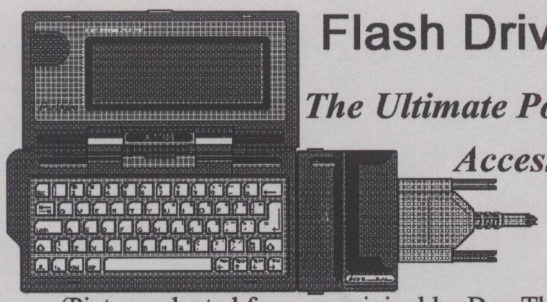
New Additions

There are no new files which have been added to existing sets this issue. Most of our existing sets are full but there are some interesting new sets in preparation. These include:

- **PW2 - PowerBasic 2**: This new set will contain some great new PowerBasic programs such as editor hooks to automatically place printer codes into your text to underline etc.
- **PB3 - PBasic 3**: more Pbasic programs
- **PC3 - PC Applications 3**: will include an automated Portfolio to PC backup utility using FT.com and an excellent shareware address book program to read and write .adr files on the PC.
- **GR5 - Graphics 5**: a host of new graphics for your Portfolio
- **UT4 - Utilities 4**: already half full with exciting new utilities for your Portfolio!
- **WD5 - Wordprocessing 3**: more wordprocessing and print utilities along with some new PRead files.

Watch *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter for details of these new sets as they become available.

The BSE I/O Interfaces and Flash Drive 25



The Ultimate Portfolio Accessories?

(Picture adapted from an original by Don Thomas Jr)

In this article we take a first look at the Universal I/O Interface and Flashdrive 25. These accessories, made by the American Company BSE, are powerful add-on units for your Portfolio.

The Universal I/O Interface

The BSE Universal I/O Interface promises to be the most useful peripheral available for your Portfolio. Inside the 2¾" x 4" x 1" case (ie same size as the standard parallel peripheral) you will find a parallel port, a serial port and an EPROM containing software which your Portfolio will read as Drive B:. Optionally, the unit is also available with a 512k RAM upgrade which will give your Port an incredible 640k of usable memory. A useful feature is that the 512k is also available as an upgrade, allowing you to purchase the basic unit to start with and add the 512k RAM later, when you can afford it.

To use the basic unit, just plug it into the expansion socket on the right hand side of your machine, switch on and away you go. With the 512k unit, a cold reboot must be performed on your Portfolio to make the additional memory available. Sensibly, drive B: contains a small program to allow you to do this without the hassle of removing the batteries and pressing the metal strip in the battery compartment. After rebooting, a 'chkdsk' command will report your C: drive is now about 140k in size and that you have about 455k of free RAM in which to run your programs!

As with the Memory Expander, the unit must remain connected to your Portfolio if you do not wish to lose the additional memory - this is due to the internal design of the Portfolio. In practice this is not a problem. We have had the unit connected for about four or five weeks now without any loss of data. The unit is less pocketable with the interface attached but will easily fit into a briefcase.

The parallel port is a standard PC port which makes it easier to interface with DOS programs (the conventional parallel interface is not standard but compatible). Printing through the port was no problem at all. Initially, we were unable to get the Portfolio's internal file-transfer software to work through the interface and contacted BSE who assured us it SHOULD work. We eventually tracked the problem down to the cable, a 25pin to 25pin D-type cable was needed with ALL pins connected - we had been using DIP's file transfer cable which does not have all pins connected. A change of cable and the file-transfer software worked faultlessly.

One drawback of the standard parallel port is that the Arlink fast file-transfer software available in Set AP3 will not work with it as it was written for the Portfolio special parallel port. If we are lucky, the author may write a modified version....

The serial connector is a small, round DIN-type socket on the back of the interface, which we are told is similar to that found on Macintosh computers. The unit comes with a small adaptor cable with the DIN plug on one end and a standard 9 pin D-type male serial connector on the other. This method is no problem when using the interface and has avoided the unit looking cluttered. Again, the use of the serial port was completely trouble free and an added bonus is that the EPROM contains Xterm2, the terminal program.

The EPROM itself adds something special to the unit as a whole. It is 128k in size and contains the following programs:

- B J Gleason's excellent **PBasic**
- **Xterm2** terminal software
- **FM.com** file manager software
- **Update.com** to correct the Portfolio ROM bugs
- **Driver software** for BSE's Flashdrive 25 & 35
- **Reboot** program to perform software warm or cold boots
- Relevant **document files** for the above programs in zipped format (ie. archived to save space)

This is a very useful collection of software to have always at your disposal and not taking up valuable memory card space. One of the few drawbacks of PBasic was that its size is 42k and took up a lot of memory card space but now it is always there for you on Drive B:.

The archived documentation seems less useful - as it is zipped you cannot read it until it has been 'unzipped'. To further complicate the issue, the unzip program is not on the drive! A suitable unzipping program is available in Set UT3 (see Page 5 of this issue) but we will supply this program anyway with any of the units we sell.

You cannot copy files to an EPROM or change the programs supplied to your own choice, but even so, the addition of 128k's worth of useful programs with the interface, especially a classic like PBasic, is a real bonus!

The only other thing we were worried about was battery drain on the Portfolio with the interface attached. We needn't have worried as power usage is not significantly greater unless you are constantly using the serial port. This is exactly the same as with the standard serial interface and like this unit, use of the mains adaptor is recommended for heavy serial port use. Another nice touch is that if you have a BSE Flashdrive with AC adaptor attached, both the Portfolio and the interface will be powered from this source.

Overall, we are really impressed. This has to be the single most useful accessory available for your Portfolio at the present time!

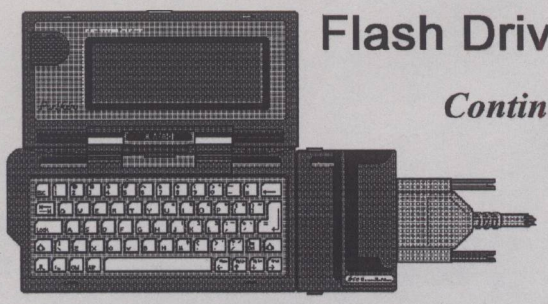
Flashdrive 25

Like the interface, the Flashdrive is compact, well made and looks good. The black case is 5" x 5¼" x 1½" in size and houses a 20Mb hard disk. The front of the unit contains a power on/off slider and indicator lights to show: if an AC adaptor is connected, when the battery is getting low, when the unit is switched on and when the disk is being read from or written to.

/Cont. on Page 7

The BSE I/O Interfaces and Flash Drive 25

Continued.....



(Picture adapted from an original by Don Thomas Jr)

The rear panel contains two parallel sockets - one to connect to the parallel port of your Portfolio (the cable for this is supplied) and the other for a cable to a printer so that you can still print from your Portfolio with the unit attached. There is also a socket for the AC adaptor which comes with the unit. When attached, the AC adaptor both powers the unit and recharges the internal batteries. One of the nice things about the Flashdrive unit is that it comes with everything needed to run it - there are no 'optional extras' you can't do without unlike some accessories you can get for the Portfolio.

Also included is a 3½" disk of software. This disk contains driver software and utilities for both the Portfolio and other DOS-based computers. This is another plus for the unit - not only can it can be used with the Portfolio, but also most DOS-based computers that have a parallel port. This means you can use the Flashdrive as an additional hard disk for your desktop computer, laptop, or other palmtop as well as for your Portfolio. This unit really is portable!

The Portfolio utilities include the device driver which must be loaded from your config.sys file, a special MkDir command and partitioning software. If you have the BSE I/O Interface, these programs are contained on the Drive B: EPROM.

The Flashdrive worked perfectly first time, but it is well worth reading the instruction booklet. For example, you must always switch the Flashdrive on *before* the Portfolio and similarly switch off the Portfolio *before* switching off the Flashdrive.

The unit is whisper quiet in use apart from a faint whirr when the disk is being accessed. The Portfolio 'sees' the unit as Drive D:. Transferring data as it does via the parallel port, it is slower in use than a conventional hard disk but still transfers data at a respectable 4Mb per minute. It is quite something after a DIR command to see the message - '30 Files 20291584 bytes free' on the humble Portfolio!

There are a couple of minor problems due to the DOS version used in the Portfolio. The first is that the conventional MKDIR command will not work properly but this is solved by the addition of BSE's ATMD program. The second is a limit to the number of files which can be held in a subdirectory and depends on the partition size. However in most cases this does not really seem to be a problem.

In summary, if you need a lot of storage space for your Portfolio then the Flashdrive is an excellent unit. Its portability between computers will enable you to easily share files between a number a different machines and it is no more difficult to hook up than for a parallel or serial file transfer. We have not had a chance to test out the length of use on batteries alone but this is reckoned to be an average of five hours.

For more information on the BSE I/O Interfaces and Flashdrive 25 and details of our 'spread the cost' payment plan contact *The Portfolio Connection* on (0491) 36880

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

Win a BSE I/O Interface in our Lucky Numbers Competition!

Win the Ultimate Portfolio Accessory!

Yes folks, one of these marvellous new interfaces is up for grabs in our latest 'Lucky Numbers' competition. If your lucky number is the one printed in the next issue of The Portfolio Connection Newsletter, then you could be the proud owner of a BSE I/O Interface.

How to Enter

In the box on the right, you will see your lucky number. Keep it safe until you receive the next issue of the Portfolio Connection Newsletter, then check your number against the winning number for the First Prize. If they match then send us your lucky number to claim your BSE Interface. If you are not lucky enough to win the grand prize, then you may still win one of the other great prizes we are giving away. The prizes are as follows:

First Prize

A BSE I/O interface plus the option to upgrade your unit to 512k at a bargain price!

Second Prize

A quality leather Carrying Case for your Portfolio. This compact case will safely hold your machine and up to three memory cards.

Third Prize

One year's free subscription to The Portfolio Connection Newsletter or a *Portfolio Connection* Credit Voucher for £7.50.

Extra chances of winning

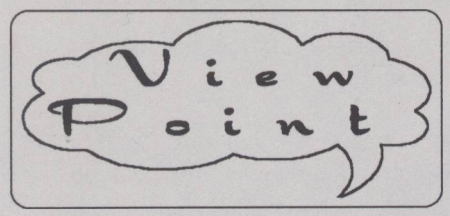
Every order dispatched between January 1st, 1993 and January 22nd will carry an additional 'Lucky Number' to increase your chances of winning.

What if I decide not to subscribe to the Newsletter?

No problem - Simply send us an SAE before 22nd January, 1993 and we will send you the list of winning numbers along with instructions for claiming your prize should you win.

YOUR LUCKY NUMBER:

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖



Readers' Letters and Tips

This month we have a tale of woe about a Port whose ribbon cable has broken and some hints for using the text editor as a simple database. Also our 'Tip of the Month' is on printer codes.....

Dear Editor

Recently while on vacation in Donegal my Portfolio refused to work - the screen stayed blank. I checked the batteries - they were OK. Dismayed, I performed immediate surgery on the machine when I got home. The fault was eventually traced to two broken tracks in the flat ribbon cable that connects the screen to the keyboard. This was repaired by carefully soldering a thin wire to bridge each broken link (very tricky, as the copper tracks are extremely fragile), and I was quite relieved when the screen came back after a reboot.

As this was a temporary repair job I phoned DIP for a replacement cable. No, we don't supply the cable on its own I was told, but we can supply the cable together with the screen (ie the top lid) and it will cost you £60! A bit steep, considering DIP had the Port on special offer recently for around £100.

Does anyone know where I can obtain the required replacement ribbon cable? The alternative is to use IDC cables which are much thicker.

It made me cast my envious eyes at the alternative "palmtops" in DIP's catalogue. The Port's slow response keys and narrow viewing angle screen are a definite no-no. However, the Port still beats the competition in three areas:

1. Cost - still the cheapest
2. Battery life - my batteries last 4 weeks.
3. Size - still the smallest neatest functional computer.

This letter was typed on the Port's Editor and later transferred to my desktop computer's word-processor via the parallel interface.

Alan Chin

..... The ribbon cable which connects the Portfolio screen to the main casing does appear to be its weak spot and we agree that £60 is too much to pay. After all Atari, we believe, have a 'new for old' replacement policy for duff Ports with a standard fee of about £50! Generally, it is probably best not to open your Portfolio to the fully flat position on a regular basis and bear in mind that this part of your machine needs to be treated with care. If anyone can help Alan in his search for a replacement ribbon cable, please contact us here at The Portfolio Connection.

All of the Palmtops have their pros and cons but we agree with your plus points for the Portfolio. The narrow viewing angle is definitely restrictive although we find the keyboard to be one of the better keyboards found on Palmtops (except for the Sharp PC3000 and Olivetti Quaderno).

Editor

Dear Editor

I have used the Utilities package and several of these programmes have improved the way I use the Portfolio. ATTRIB, XCOPY, PASSWORD and CMDEDIT are all very useful in the office.

I keep to standard six line database framework in two text files called CURRENT and CLEARED on Drive C:\ to log in my cases viz:

- Name
- Ref
- Ref2
- recd
- priority
- cleared

with a line in between each. I rarely need to go beyond a screen width per line of information. Searching is easy and, on completion of a case, I cut the details to the clipboard, close up the gap, save the file, load CLEARED and paste to the bottom of the file. Each week I print out the hardcopy for progress checking.

I have also compiled a short batch file called SHOW which screens a six-line display (a record) at a time. I have just over sixty cases at present and at any one time in CURRENT giving a size of about 5K. Loading will never be that quick to take your breath away but I can spare 9 seconds or so from time to time!

Were it to get too big, slow or cumbersome I would probably split the cases into other categories (CURRENT 1 and 2 maybe) and use the FIND utility to search for the details in both with "*.TXT" filter. (The essence of the Port is summed up here, I feel, in that it must be more satisfying to use and take a machine to greater limits with a little thought and invention than to use only a small percent of a larger machine's abilities. Shouldn't the user be the one in command not the machine?)

Another batch file, ARC, uses XCOPY to remove the "A" attribute when backing onto RAM card so using ATTRIB tells me whether the file has been changed since last back up - very good for forgetful types!

I have experimented with the .ADR files in place of .TXT but I feel the latter suits my needs better. I must admit to a sense of satisfaction occasionally when I see colleagues struggling with reams of paper or card index boxes - but Port owners would never stoop to gloat openly would we?

Has anyone found a decent case for the Port and it's bits and bobs (mains adaptor, cables etc)? I have read the horror stories of DIP's plastic effort and saw one briefly from a distance. I think the stories are probably true! the Atari Lynx Kitcase that my lad uses seems a nifty bit of gear for about 12 quid. Anybody got any ideas?

John S. Akers

..... Thanks for your tips on using the text editor as a database. It is also worth remembering that .ADR files are stored in text format, so these can easily be loaded into the editor for editing and searching.

Finding a reasonable case for the Portfolio is a bit of a problem. To be fair, DIP's 'plastic effort' was only meant to be a presentation case given free with the 'Pocket Professional Set' and not for serious storage. DIP produce a very well made leather case with metaled corners which will hold the Portfolio and three memory cards. This is ideal if it is all you need to carry but is no use if you carry peripherals and the ever-needed spare set of batteries. Such a case has just become available from Atari (US) - we'll let you know when we get further details...

Editor

/Cont. on Page 9

Classifieds

- **For Sale - Atari Portfolio** with mains adaptor, Sigma Press Software Disk, Manuals etc. Bargain only £79. Can post. Write to G. Schrader, 61 Harington Road, Formby, Merseyside, L37 1PY.
- **For Sale - Portfolio** £80, Memory Expander Plus £70, Psion Organiser II, XP & 128K Data Pak & Programming Book £70 Phone Derek (0292) 445570
- **For Sale - Chequewriter** £25 incl. post, Finance Card £20 incl. post Ring Bert 055-666-321
- **For Sale - Parallel Interface** with software (51/4" disk) and cable for PC connection. £25 ono. Phone 0382 761026
- **For Sale - Memory Expander** Plus £60, PC Card Drive £50, Utilities Card £20. Contact The Portfolio Connection.
- **Wanted - Technical Reference** Manual. Phone David Churchman 081 686 8158
- **Wanted - Parallel File Transfer** Software - please contact the Portfolio Connection. NB Would the person who asked us to place this ad please get in touch as we appear to have mislaid your name!

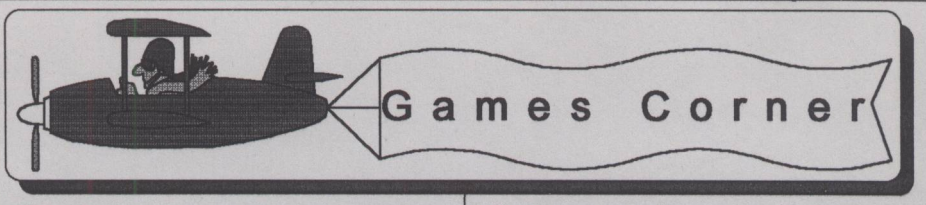
Buyers & Sellers Directory

Some classifieds did not reach the newsletter as we are often phoned by people wanting Portfolio peripherals and, where possible, refer them to those of you who are selling equipment. As a result, we are starting a Buyers & Sellers Directory - contact *The Portfolio Connection* and let us know what you are selling. We will enter this into a directory. Those of you who are after specific Portfolio items can contact us and we will put you in touch with the sellers. Any items not sold by the next Newsletter will go in as classifieds. This should make for a quicker turnover all round so we'll try this scheme for a few months and see how it goes.

The Portfolio Connection Newsletter Classifieds are FREE. Send your advert to :

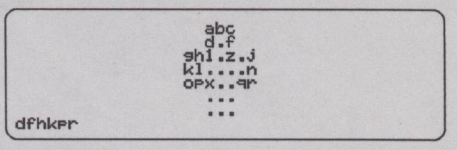
The Portfolio Connection Newsletter
Bucklands Cottage, Wallingford Rd
Cholsey Oxon OX10 9HB

The contents of The Portfolio Connection Newsletter are ©1992 Peter Bennett



Sol

Sol is a game of Peg Solitaire written by Hugh Satow. On starting the game you are presented with four options: H(ist. O(rg, I(norg, E(nd. Pressing the first letter gets you the option. E(nd exits the game. I(norg instructs the computer to play - this is so fast it's over before you blink! Luckily the H(ist option allows you to trace back all of the moves. O(rg allows you to play yourself. The pegs are represented by a combination of letters and numbers. At the bottom of the screen, the letters and numbers you can select are listed. The aim is to be left with just one peg in the centre. A simple but effective game.



View Point - Tip of the Month

Continued from Page 8

Printer Controls

This is a first attempt to list printer controls codes which work from the text editor. As you will appreciate, virtually none of this is covered in the Portfolio manual.

The printer, an Olivetti 109, is set to its default settings ie EPSON 850 emulation, UK character set, 10cpi, LQ.

For a start, underlining is achieved by placing the cursor in front of the text and pressing SHIFT6 [-1 (Note that what appears on the screen is ^[-1) T o remove underlining put the cursor at the end of the text and press SHIFT6 [-0.

Italics are enabled with the code SHIFT6 [4 and disabled thus by inserting the code SHIFT6 [5

The normal **line spacing** is 6 Lines Per Inch (LPI) which you probably realise equates to a line feed of 1/6in. To control line pitch within a document, let's insert 1/8in Line Feed code to give 8 LPI. The code for this is SHIFT6 [0. It is removed with the code SHIFT6 [2.

To set **condensed** mode insert the code SHIFT6 0. This of course will affect the margins because they are dependant on character spacing. Note the screen stays the same - what can you expect for £200? To return to the default setting insert the code SHIFT6 R.

Double height is set with the code SHIFT6 [w1 (small w). **Double width** is set with SHIFT6 [W1 (capital W). **Double Height Double Width** is set by both codes. Substitute 0 for 1 for the remove code.

Remember the cursor controls:

- [Ctrl][left arrow] 1 word left
- [Ctrl][right arrow] 1 word right
- [Ctrl][Pg Up] Top of file
- [Ctrl][Pg Dn] Bottom of file
- [Pg Up] 3 or 4 lines up
- [Pg Dn] 3 or 4 lines down
- [Ctrl][Home] delete to start of line
- [Ctrl][End] delete to end of line
- [Ctrl][L] delete line
- [Ctrl][backspace] delete word left
- [Ctrl][W] delete word right
- To **undelete** use [F4] !!

A **hard page break** is set by SHIFT6 1 and finally, a **screen dump** is achieved by [Fn]-P.

Philip Dibb

..... For this excellent guide to printer codes, we are awarding a free Portfolio Connection set to Philip for this 'Tip of the Month'. He did in fact send us a sheet with the results printed out but unfortunately we are not able to reproduce this due to typesetting limitations. Watch the next issue for more on printer codes and a way of inserting some of these codes automatically!

Editor

Send your letters/tips to:
The Portfolio Connection

Next Issue:

The next issue of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter will be out the last week in January, but remember:

YOU MUST SUBSCRIBE TO RECEIVE IT!

- Prize winning Lucky Number
- PBasic Column
- Beginner's Column
- More on Printer Codes
- Latest news and Reviews

DON'T MISS IT!

"Atari" and "Portfolio" are trademarks of the Atari Corporation
DIP" is a trademark of DIP Systems Ltd.